

# The Classical Weekly

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VOLUME XXVI, No. 11

MONDAY, JANUARY 9, 1933

WHOLE NO. 701

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## CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POETRY<sup>1</sup>

In 1923 some of his readers were amazed at Mr. Louis Untermeyer's statement<sup>2</sup> that classical mythology was definitely out of place in poems representative of the American spirit. We reminded one another that Mr. Untermeyer's own verse owed its charm in no small degree to his adeptness in classical allusions. In support of the statement cited above Mr. Untermeyer quoted Whitman's appeal, "Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia!" He recalled a day not much earlier when our poetry had been "a tiresome sightseeing tour through Bullfinch's *Classical Mythology*". Miss Harriet Monroe had written to the same effect in 1917, declaring that she, as an editor of a poetry magazine, was extremely tired of Pan and Helen<sup>3</sup>. Other remarks of the same nature have been made since theirs.

By coincidence, in the year in which Mr. Untermeyer's statement was made, the American Classical League framed its pronouncement that a familiarity with mythology was one of the worthy pedagogical aims in the teaching of Latin in American Schools<sup>4</sup>. The ability of pupils to understand such allusions has been often stressed as an important objective of such teaching. No one seems to have mentioned the fact that making accurate mythological allusions was at least equally important.

If mythological details have no place in twentieth-century American poetry, the teacher of classical literature must be ready to warn his pupils against their use. An examination of current verse, however, indicates that poets here and now are utilizing, as poets of other periods utilized, the graphic and appealing pictures of classical myth, are exercising intelligent taste in their application, and are trusting their readers to know what such a reference *suggests* as well as what it *says*. The study of the use of mythology in current poetry elicits a number of conclusions, but not that mythology deserves banishment from poetry. Contemporary poets may all reply to Whitman's challenge with the question which Miss Edna Millay addressed to her bridegroom on her wedding-eve<sup>5</sup>:

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read at the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held at Central High School, Philadelphia, May 6-7, 1932.

<sup>2</sup>In his book, *American Poetry Since 1900*, 3-4 (New York, Holt, 1923).

<sup>3</sup>*Ibidem*, 8. The verse of Whitman cited above is to be found in his *Song of the Exposition*, in the Inclusive Edition of *Leaves of Grass*, 166 (Garden City, Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1928). This ode invites the Muse to migrate only temporarily from classical scenes, chiefly for the purpose of lending her inspiring presence to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876, for which the poem was written.

<sup>4</sup>See Mrs. Marguerite Wilkinson, *New Voices*, 205 (New York, Macmillan, 1921).

<sup>5</sup>The Classical Investigation, General Report, Part I, 66 (Princeton University Press, 1924).

<sup>6</sup>In Sonnet, reprinted in Harriet Monroe, *The New Poetry*, 343 (New York, Macmillan, 1928).

Cherish you then the hope I shall forget  
At length, my lord, Pieria? . . .

The unwieldy bulk of contemporary verse should prove our national devotion to Pieria. It is stated that 500 volumes of poetry are printed every year in America<sup>6</sup>. There are above the starvation-line half a dozen journals devoted to poetry. Verse abounds in the periodicals, even in newspapers and in 'house-organs'.

I have recently scanned the important American poets to discover and list their mythological references. Poems printed in representative twentieth-century periodicals were subjected to the same sort of examination. I have also inspected the verses in well-known anthologies<sup>7a</sup> and collections. The only poems excluded from this examination are those which were written in confessed imitation of classical models and those which were written for publication in classical periodicals (including High School and Latin Club papers). In naming the current American poets who can be called really important one is aware that personal preferences do not make a careful standard, but few will disagree with the statement that the most widely read and the most influential of these writers include E. A. Robinson, Robert Frost, Edgar Lee Masters, Carl Sandburg, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Sara Teasdale, the Benets, the Untermeyers, and Edna Millay<sup>8</sup>.

The resulting catalogue of 1,692 mythological allusions found in poems of the opening third of our century shows a range from lengthy narrative episodes to a mere phrase, a simile, or a suggestive name. The Great Gods are named in 231 of the 1,692 references. All the deities are found in these poems. The number of their appearances may show our relative acquaintance with them: Apollo 55, Aphrodite 43, Artemis 30, Zeus 29, Athena 15, Hermes 14, Ares 12, Poseidon 10, Demeter 8, Hera 6, Hephaestus 6, Vesta 3. The Muses are conventionally called deities; twenty-two poems mention them as a group. Every Muse (except Erato) is specifically named once. Clio and Urania are each named twice. A distinctively American Muse is found so seldom that the merit of that addressed by Stephen Vincent Benet in John Brown's Body<sup>9</sup> is the

<sup>7</sup>See Louis Untermeyer, in the Foreword of the Fourth Revised Edition of *Modern American Poetry*, vi (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930).

<sup>8</sup>All the editors of the anthologies which I used are recognized critics. When one is making a broad survey, there is an advantage in relying upon the taste and discernment of such critics. None of them would be likely to include a poem in his book which contained mythological allusions which, he thought, readers would not comprehend.

<sup>9</sup>The review of this material would have been somewhat facilitated by an earlier publication of Professor Helen H. Law's Bibliography of Greek Myth in English Poetry, received for distribution by the Service Bureau for Classical Teachers, at New York University, on the very day of the presentation of this paper at Philadelphia.

<sup>10</sup>John Brown's Body, 3 (Garden City, Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1928).

<sup>11</sup>Some valuable remarks on the modern Muse are to be found in a paper entitled *The Muse, The Poet, and the Grammarian*, by Samuel E. Bassett, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 18.193-199.

more conspicuous for its adaptation of classical feeling and attribute without offensive distortion.

Minor deities, semi-divinities, mortals associated with the deities, and eschatological figures abound. Hades himself appears, under the name Hades, in only three poems. He appears oftener as Orcus, Death, or Pluto. Charon is seen only three times, but Cerberus is in seven of our poems. In six poems the Furies bear that name; twice (in works of E. A. Robinson<sup>10</sup> and Edith M. Thomas<sup>11</sup>), they bear the name Eumenides. Alecto (Allecto) is mentioned eleven times; she is the only Fury called by name. The rivers of the Lower World are well known, especially Lethe, which is named in sixteen poems. Tartarus is absent entirely, but other features of the Afterworld are of frequent occurrence.

Bacchus and Pan occupy large places in this list; both show interesting variations from classical prototypes. Both are naturalized and made to serve modern thoughts. Pan appears throughout the thirty years, but Bacchus belongs to the more recent period. A few allusions to Pan are unacknowledged, for instance, in *Ash Wednesday*<sup>12</sup>, a poem by John Erskine, in a reference to Church organs that

... yet inherit like an old blood-taint  
Some naked caperings in the godliest tune—  
Goat-songs and jests strong with the breath of  
Pan....

Edna Millay<sup>13</sup> describes a grove dedicated to Eros which must become "...a pasture for the shaggy goats of Pan..." M. F. Egan writes thus<sup>14</sup>: "He followed Christ, yet for dead Pan he sighed". He is answered by Walter Adolphe Roberts<sup>15</sup>: "Pan is not dead, but sleeping in the brake". From these comparative heights one may descend in the company of Pan into any depth of mawkish Nature sentiment.

The range of Bacchus is somewhat narrower, but among the striking uses of his name stands the following, in a sonnet of Witter Bynner, entitled *To a Boot-legger*<sup>16</sup>:

Bacchus, O Bacchus, in your motor-car  
Arrive revealed again! Though time bereaves  
You of your boyhood grace and has veined your hand,  
Let us acknowledge you the god you are—  
Whose head, no longer crowned with dewy leaves,  
Is Greek no less in this apostate land.

Pan is found in sixty-eight poems, Dionysus in sixty-three. Less frequent use is made of the names of Persephone, Eros, Phaethon, Orpheus, Silenus, Aeolus, Eos, Atlas, Enceladus, Antaeus, Polyphemus, Scylla,

<sup>10</sup>Captain Craig, in *Collected Poems* by Edwin Arlington Robinson, 142 (New York, Macmillan, 1921).

<sup>11</sup>The Good Furies, in Jessie Rittenhouse, *Selected Poems* of Edith M. Thomas, 193 (New York, Harper Brothers, 1926).

<sup>12</sup>Marquette Wilkinson, *New Voices*, 165 (see note 4, above).

<sup>13</sup>Harriet Monroe, *The New Poetry*, 343 (see note 6, above).

<sup>14</sup>Maurice Guérin, in Richard Le Gallienne, *The Modern Book of American Verse*, 234 (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1925).

<sup>15</sup>In *Vilanelle to the Living Pan*, in Richard Le Gallienne, 374 (see note 14, above). This poem is in reply to the most frequently reprinted of all American mythological poems, E. C. Stedman's *Pan in Wall Street* (see <Stedman's> Poems, 90 [Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1908]).

<sup>16</sup>The New Republic 57 (1928), 98. A very interesting parallel to the attention given to Bacchus in contemporary American literature is to be found in an article entitled *A Rebirth of Dionysus*—in Russia, by Clarence A. Manning, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 18.27-29.

Hydra, Medusa, Sphinx, Pegasus, Phoenix, Dryads, Nereids, Oceanids, Sirens, Oreads, Nymphs, Titans, and one lone Harpy. Chiron and Nessus are called by name. References to the Centaurs in general occur frequently.

Various narrative poems have settings in places associated with mythology. The islands, rivers, springs, and mountains of the Greek world often embellish the long 'impressionistic' lists which Whitman's influence has made a conspicuous feature of recent poetry. Symbolic use of geographical names is also common. Parnassus is the favorite among the mountains, Castalia among the springs, Arcadia among the parts of Greece. Places in Crete are named oftener than places in Sicily. Of greatest appeal among the place-names, however, is the name of the Hesperides; ten poems treat them or mention them. George Sterling<sup>17</sup> plays neatly upon the name *Aeaea* as a combination of AE (the pseudonymous signature of the great Irish critic, George William Russell) and the name of Circe's home.

Jason and Heracles have always been prominent in poetry. They appear in more American poems than do the other Heroes; the former appears in twelve poems, the latter in ten. Nine poets use the Latin form of the name, Hercules, but Edgar Lee Masters consistently prefers the form Heracles. Perseus is named in only four places, Theseus in three; the Dioscuri are named together twice, but each is named separately in one poem.

The largest group of classical figures used to carry modern poetic thought is that of Homeric personages (forty-eight in all are named). In contrast with the relative frequency of the appearance of other female characters is the total absence of Hecuba from the poems examined. Characters from the *Odyssey* are numerically more important than those from the *Iliad*. Odysseus himself appears in fifteen poems (seven times he is called by his Greek name, eight times by his Latin name). Penelope appears in six poems. In other poems we find Circe, Calypso, Polyphemus, Anticlea, Laertes, Telemachus, the dog Argus, Eurylochus, and Nausicaa. Many of the remaining Homeric names are those of Greek or Trojan warriors found in Whitmanesque 'catalogues'. Most of these Homeric allusions follow Homer closely; even Helen seems, in spite of certain strong intervening influences, nearer to Homer in the seventy-three American allusions to her than she does in Ovid or in the English classicists. Neither 'smart'<sup>18</sup> nor conventional verse is ever entirely free from an effort to characterize Helen in modern terms. The Helen of conservative Sara Teasdale (1911)<sup>19</sup> is not unlike the Helen of non-conformist

<sup>17</sup>I saw this poem in a clipping which came to me from California. It was sent by a former student, a newspaper woman who remembers only that she found it in some publication which, she thought, I would not be likely to see. No title was printed with the poem; it occurred in the course of an appreciative essay on "AE" (= George William Russell). There is no title in the bibliographies which suggests this poem.

<sup>18</sup>Compare e. g. the query of Don Marquis, in *Love Sonnets of a Cave Man*, 25 (Garden City, Doubleday, Doran, and Company, 1928): "Was Argive Helen but a dumb-belle too Whom Homer would have wearied?"

<sup>19</sup>Helen of Troy (New York, Macmillan, 1911). Compare Louis Untermeyer, *American Poetry Since 1900*, 207 (see note 2, above).

James Oppenheim<sup>20</sup>, or that of the much younger writer, Stephen Benét<sup>21</sup>. The dominance among the interests of our writers of Helen and her loves compels the statement which Sparta makes to Troy in a poem by Clement Wood<sup>22</sup>:

All ages headline your shy dream,  
And whisper, "Helen... Paris... Yes, it's true!"  
... How far that little scandal sheds its beam!

Another and smaller group of references, those to the characters of Greek tragedy, deserves more attention. Although their variations from tragic prototypes are slight, these characters as they appear in our poems do not indicate direct derivation from Greek literature, or even collateral inheritance through Bullfinch, Browning, or Racine. Rather, they show detailed acquaintance with a few tragedies as they stand in popular English versions and a general ignorance of all the rest. Phaedra, Hippolytus, Alcestis, and Prometheus almost monopolize this group of citations. Orestes, Electra, Iphigenia, Tiresias, Medea, and Agave are seen but once each, Pentheus twice, and Oedipus three times. Despite the bandying of his name as a semi-scientific technicality in recent years, Oedipus stands only in vague connotations in William Alexander Percy<sup>23</sup>, in one meaningless allusion made by Ellen Glines<sup>24</sup> (who spells his name inexpertly), and in one Phi Beta Kappa poem<sup>25</sup>. In the six uses of Agamemnon's name there is no hint of Aeschylus; Cassandra, on the other hand, in works of Mrs. Richard Aldington (whose poems are published over the initials "H. D." [= Hilda Doolittle])<sup>26</sup>, Babette Deutsch<sup>27</sup>, E. A. Robinson<sup>28</sup>, and Edith M. Thomas<sup>29</sup>, seems to be derived from tragedy.

Our poets expect us to know a long list of names derived from other parts of Greek literature. Almost every writer gives to some mythological figure tone or coloration attractively expressed. A mere enumeration of the figures used in this way suggests the variety of their appeal: Atalanta, Endymion, Bellerophon, Althea, Amphion, Cadmus, Erechtheus, Danae, Pandora, Idas, Marpessa, Procrustes, Peleus, Semele, Andromeda, Tyro, Harpalycé, Oenone, Adonis, Actaeon, Hippomenes, Marsyas, and the Minotaur. Ata-

lanta, Endymion, Actaeon, and Danae are most frequently mentioned.

The influence of Ovid is still stronger than that of any other Latin writer on the content of poetry, as the number of direct reminiscences of his stories and his descriptions indicates. References to Daphne, Arachne, Ariadne, Icarus, Daedalus, Orion, Midas, Narcissus, Leander, Pygmalion, Leda, Tithonus, Philemon, Bau-cis, Hyacinthus, Thisbe, Deucalion, Arethusa, Evadne, Syrinx, Eurydice, and the Pleiades all hint at direct transmission from his poems into modern works. Icarus is mentioned three times as often as Daedalus. This fact raises a problem in poetic adaptation. Why the son should have become the accepted type of the pioneer aviator and should thus adorn not only accounts of the Kitty Hawk experiments, but also the Lindbergh saga is not apparent; certainly the fact is not due to reflection on the end of the Daedalus-Icarus story.

Of other figures of Latin literature, the most frequent in our poems is Psyche. In six poems she comes directly from Apuleius<sup>30</sup>. Second to her is Dido, although Vergilian allusions are in general avoided as either too obvious or too academic. Few names suggest Latin antecedents other than Ovidian.

In the whole array, however, no names seem to be so well used as those of the gods. Though our poets fumble in their attempts to express their *general* pagan concepts, *individual* deities are clearly viewed and carefully presented in many poems. When Edgar Lee Masters sees Olympus as "... Palace no more, a footstool for Jehovah of Judea..."<sup>31</sup>, and when E. A. Robinson calls Lincoln an Olympian<sup>32</sup>, they typify the general adoption on the part of our writers of Olympus as a synonym for paganism or as a symbol of secular greatness. An occasional modernization of this name is less felicitous, such as that of the lady who would "Radio to Olympus"<sup>33</sup> for relief from current political injustice. Only one picture of Olympus (in Mrs. Conkling's poem, *The Pool*<sup>34</sup>) is without modern or extraneous connotations; she describes "vales Olympus, where pale Olympus broods".

No deity represents so well and so fully as Apollo the use our poets make of the Olympians. When Don Marquis shouts<sup>35</sup>, "Come up!... Up here with Apollo and me!", when Vachel Lindsay pleads with men to "Behold Apollo in the sun"<sup>36</sup>, when Masters, in an outburst against Christian evangelism, suggests "setting up a booth to Apollo"<sup>37</sup>, they are using a name not so much conventionalized as stereotyped. Edna Millay humorously contrasts a tenor with Apollo<sup>38</sup>; Ralph

<sup>20</sup>Though the numerous allusions to Helen in this poet's work are made by Mr. Untermyer (American Poetry Since 1900; see note 2, above) the subject of both sharp comment (273) and ridiculous pun (275), those allusions show a uniform earnestness in accurate characterization.

<sup>21</sup>This poet's use of Helen in his verses is discussed by Mrs. Wilkinson, in *New Voices*, 412 (see note 4, above).

<sup>22</sup>In *Sparta to Troy*, in John Farrar, Bookman Anthology of Verse, 71 (New York, George H. Doran Company, 1922).

<sup>23</sup>In a poem entitled *Delphi Humoresque*, published in *Contemporary Verse*, 19 (1925), 94.

<sup>24</sup>In a poem entitled *No Roses*, reprinted from the magazine called *Palms*, in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1926, 186 (Boston, B. J. Brimmer Co., 1926).

<sup>25</sup>In *Edipus*, by Ruth Evelyn Henderson, listed, from *The Phi Beta Kappa Key*, in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1928, 517 (see note 24, above). I may note here that current copies of this work bear a different imprint, "New York, Harold Vinal, Ltd., 1928". Evidently, since 1928, the control of this work has changed hands.

<sup>26</sup>In *Cassandra*, a prayer to Hymen, in *Collected Poems of H. D.* (Mrs. Aldington), 250 (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1925).

<sup>27</sup>In *Tuppence Coloured*, reprinted in William Rose Benét's *Poems for Youth*, 492 (New York, Dutton, 1925).

<sup>28</sup>In *Cassandra*, in *Collected Poems* by Edwin Arlington Robinson, 11 (see note 10, above).

<sup>29</sup>In *Cassandra*, in *The Guest at the Gate*, 26 (New York, Harper Brothers, 1909).

<sup>30</sup>Two additional titles of American poems pertinent here are listed in Professor Law's Bibliography, 32-33 (see note 8, above).

<sup>31</sup>In *Invocation to the Gods*, in Poems <of Edgar Lee Masters>, 308 (New York, Macmillan, 1925).

<sup>32</sup>In *The Master*, reprinted in Louis Untermeyer, American Poetry Since 1900, 51 (see note 2, above).

<sup>33</sup>Lillian Spencer White, listed, from the Norfolk Lyric, in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1928, 593 (see note 25, above).

<sup>34</sup>In *Symphony of a Mexican Garden*, Part II, published in *Poetry* 1 (1913), 15.

<sup>35</sup>In *Premonitions* VIII, reprinted in William Rose Benét's *Poems for Youth*, 356 (see note 27, above).

<sup>36</sup>In *Litanies of the Heroes*, in Poems <of Vachel Lindsay>, 188 (New York, Macmillan, 1929).

<sup>37</sup>In *The Great Merger*, in Poems <of Edgar Lee Masters>, 232.

<sup>38</sup>The Lamp and the Bell, 11 (New York, Harper Brothers, 1921).

Chaney<sup>39</sup> includes "Apollo thumping on a drum" in one of his parades; and Ezra Pound calls<sup>40</sup> minor poets "out-weariers of Apollo", just as E. A. Robinson styles an eccentric character "one of Apollo's pensioners, an usher in the Palace of the Sun"<sup>41</sup>, and Archibald MacLeish<sup>42</sup>, Percy Mackaye<sup>43</sup>, and R. B. Glaenzer<sup>44</sup> illuminate with the name of Apollo other modern sentiments. All the usual attributes of Apollo appear in our poems. His beauty, his lyre, his song, his dance, his laughter, his tree, his horses, and his abodes are employed. Compare, for example, the words "the gold-faced central sun wandering like glittering Apollo", which are to be found in a verse of Hervey Allen<sup>45</sup>. Lindsay<sup>46</sup> calls a little girl's dancing lesson "her noble devotion" to Apollo. In poems of Edna Millay<sup>47</sup> and Patrick Chalmers<sup>48</sup> the wooing of Daphne differs from Apollo's wooing of Daphne as described in Ovid. Witter Bynner<sup>49</sup> gives Apollo a lyre; Masters<sup>50</sup> gives him a cithara. Both Roselle Montgomery<sup>51</sup> and Professor G. M. Whicher<sup>52</sup> have written a Prayer to Apollo; Masters invokes Apollo in a long choral ode<sup>53</sup>. Many comment upon Apollo in describing works of art; his picture is in a bootblack's murals described by William Carlos Williams in an extravaganza<sup>54</sup>; his statue stands in a garden of the year 1865 described by Elinor Wylie<sup>55</sup>; the only classical allusion in the American Anthology of Jewish Poetry is an English version of a Hebrew contemplation, Before the Statue of Apollo, by Saul Tchernikovski<sup>56</sup>. Agnes Lee, Ezra Pound, Ted Olson, Orrick Johns, Harry Kemp, W. A. Percy, Roy Zeiss, Willa Cather, Florence Earle Coates, Mrs. Aldington ("H. D."), and Harriet Monroe all have treated Apollo in superior verses. None expresses better than E. A. Robinson the position of this god in our culture<sup>57</sup>:

The Lord Apollo who has never died  
Still holds alone his immemorial reign,  
Supreme in an impregnable domain  
That with his magic he has fortified.

His divine sister seems also effectively adapted to our peculiar poetic demands, as poems by Elinor

<sup>39</sup>In Dark Encounter, reprinted from The World Tomorrow, in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1925, 70 (Boston, B. J. Brimmer Co., 1925).

<sup>40</sup>See Poems from the Propertius Series, Poetry 13 (1919), 297.

<sup>41</sup>Captain Craig, in Collected Poems by Edwin Arlington Robinson, 144 (see note 10, above).

<sup>42</sup>In The Columnist, in The New Republic 40 (1924), 226.

<sup>43</sup>In Rhyme, reprinted from the Boston Evening Transcript, in Special Bulletin of the American Association for International Conciliation, 23 (New York, 1914).

<sup>44</sup>In Pomegranate, Poetry 7 (1916), 128.

<sup>45</sup>In Northern Earth Mood, Poetry 25 (1925), 312.

<sup>46</sup>In How a Little Girl Danced, in Poems <of Vachel Lindsay>, 64 (see note 36, above).

<sup>47</sup>In Daphne, in A Few Figs from Thistles, 27 (New York, Harper Brothers, 1922).

<sup>48</sup>In Daphne, in Green Days and Blue Days, 14 (Baltimore, Norman, Remington Company, 1926).

<sup>49</sup>In The Singing Huntsman, reprinted in Untermyer, Modern American Poetry<sup>3</sup>, 203 (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1925).

<sup>50</sup>In Marsyas, in Edgar Lee Masters, The Great Valley, 155 (New York, Macmillan, 1916).

<sup>51</sup>In The New York Times, November 24, 1922.

<sup>52</sup>In The New York World, September 25, 1925.

<sup>53</sup>In An Invocation to the Gods, in Poems <of Edgar Lee Masters>, 305-308.

<sup>54</sup>In Paterson, in The Dial 82 (1927), 91.

<sup>55</sup>In Miranda's Supper, in The Century Magazine 109 (1924), 181.

<sup>56</sup>Philip M. Raskin, Anthology of Modern Jewish Poetry, 155 (New York, Behrman's Jewish Book Shop, 1927).

<sup>57</sup>In Many are Called, in Collected Poems by Edwin Arlington Robinson, 581 (see note 10, above).

Wylie, Amy Lowell, Edith Wharton, Katherine Lee Bates, Winifred Welles, Mrs. Aldington ("H. D."), Keith Preston, Amelia Burr, Roselle Montgomery, and Bernice L. Kenyon abundantly testify. Keats, Longfellow, and Lowell have accentuated the Endymion episode as poetic material, but its most enjoyable presentation is an allusion to Artemis in a song by Amy Lowell, entitled For a Viola d'Amore<sup>58</sup>.

Few dignified allusions are made in our literature to Aphrodite. She will not even be flattered to find herself named oftener than other goddesses, for that is a distinction of hers as old as lyric itself. Nothing very attractive appears in the multitude of trite and tropic allusions to Aphrodite, or in the variations played upon Sapphic love-themes (although one by Sara Teasdale<sup>59</sup> surpasses the others), or even in such pictures as that in Allen Tate's verses<sup>60</sup>,

Down from the skyscrapers flutters a death's shroud  
Draping the shoulders of a wrinkled Aphrodite,

or in John Dos Passos's salutation to Venus when a film actress drank poison<sup>61</sup>. Even Robinson<sup>62</sup> has a courtesan's prayer to Aphrodite. Under her various names she is the subject of many a *tour de force* and of many a ponderous innuendo. She figures, however, in only one worthily dignified poem, a portion of a stately ode by Edgar Lee Masters<sup>63</sup>. Even the technical merit of the verses which refer to this goddess is, as a rule, slight<sup>64</sup>.

There are sounder reasons for expecting a paucity of classical mythological references in current American verse than Miss Monroe's editorial weariness, Whitman's patriotic enthusiasm, or American dislike of appearing pedantic. Classical myth is essentially rural in scene; our poetry is becoming more and more urban. Many classical names and epithets are polysyllabic; terseness is to-day's fashion in poetry. Most important of all, classical mythology is masculine and treats gods and mortals alike from a masculine point of view; American poetry is dominated by women, much of it is written by women, and still more of it is published for women readers. A sweeping glance discloses that its interests and its feelings are feminine. Consequently, the female figures of the old myths receive a disproportionate attention.

Relatively few of the myths and concepts of Greece lend themselves to easy modernization. Herein is doubtless the best reason for our continued admission of mythological allusion as one of the harmonious and economical conveyors of feeling and thought in verse. Herein, too, is our compelling reason for insisting upon strict accuracy in such allusion.

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JAMES STINCHCOMB

<sup>58</sup>See Harper's Magazine 145 (1922), 701.

<sup>59</sup>In Sappho, in Jessie Ridderhouse, A Little Book of Modern Verse, 64 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913).

<sup>60</sup>In Perimeters, reprinted from Fugitive, in Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1923, 337 (Boston, B. J. Brimmer Co., 1923).

<sup>61</sup>"On Foreign Travel" IV, in A Pushcart at the Curb, 182 (New York, George H. Doran Company, 1922).

<sup>62</sup>In Lais to Aphrodite, in Collected Poems by Edwin Arlington Robinson, 230 (see note 10, above).

<sup>63</sup>In An Invocation to the Gods (see note 53, above).

<sup>64</sup>An exception to this statement is a poem by Howard M. Jones, entitled Aphrodite, Poetry 8 (1917), 10.

## REVIEWS

*Third Year Latin, With Introduction, Notes, Vocabulary, and Grammatical Appendix.* By Harry E. Wedeck. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co. (1931). Pp. xxviii + 410.

The Introduction of Mr. Wedeck's book, *Third Year Latin*, which presents in almost tabloid form, besides other things, the Life of Cicero (xv-xviii), An Estimate of Cicero's Character and of his Influence (xviii-xix), Literary Activities of Cicero (xix-xxi), The Roman Constitution (xxii-xxvi), Some Important Features About the Topography of Rome (xxvi-xxvii), and a list of Novels and Stories Dealing with Roman Life<sup>1</sup> (xxvii), errs on the side of brevity. The book proper consists of five parts. Part I (1-119) embodies four speeches of Cicero—In Catilinam 1, 3, De Imperio Cn. Pompei, and Pro Archia. This is a good traditional take-off; these orations are well presented and annotated. The notes here, as elsewhere throughout the book, are printed below the text. Part II (123-132) consists of additional selections from Cicero, which should have been restricted to the Letters. Part III (135-199) embraces selections from a variety of Latin prose authors. Part IV (203-209) is a collection of epitaphs and other inscriptions—for third-year students!! Part V (213-244) presents selections from Ovid. These piecemeal excerpts are wholly contrary to the reviewer's pedagogic judgment. The style necessarily varies widely from author to author, and thorough acquaintance with the style of an author is of primary importance to facile reading of that author. Otherwise separate problems of confusion confront the pupils on every page, and discouragement is the result. The selections given run the gamut from the condensed difficulty of Tacitus to the diffuse difficulty of Suetonius. Pliny the Elder, too, is there, and Sallust, Ammianus Marcellinus, Apuleius, Celsus, Seneca, and St. Augustine—a bewildering *mélange* of styles, as well as of subjects utterly without continuity of theme or thought. The effect is characteristically Neo-American. The minds of our young people are desultory and flighty enough without being addled and confused even by the Classics. Imagine a serious text-book for the instruction of foreign pupils in the English language which should open with several chapters from *Vanity Fair*, followed by two from different portions of *Oliver Twist*, some paragraphs from Burke and Daniel Webster, the peroration of a sermon by Jonathan Edwards, some excerpts from Pepys's Diary, a few pages from Stalkey and Company and from *A Farewell to Arms*, and should close with some choice jokes from *Life and Punch* and from the "Spice of Life" columns of the *Literary Digest*, and, last of all, certain inscriptions from the old tombstones of a New England cemetery. What idea of the literature of the English-speaking world would the pupil gather from such a book? What idea of pure English style? Above all, what idea of English or American life? Yet 'Life' was the shibboleth

of the Classical Investigation of the American Classical League!

The Grammatical Appendix (257-333) is open to serious criticism. The illustrative Latin examples are not located. Indeed, many of them are 'made Latin'. Nor is this 'made Latin' always felicitously constructed. Moreover, the statements of the principles of syntax are not always clear or sufficiently complete. Some instances may be cited. All scholars know that the tense of an optative subjunctive is of vital importance; yet nothing whatever is said about tense-usage in § 253, where the optative subjunctive is treated. All that is said of it is, "The subjunctive, sometimes with *utinam*, *would that*, is often used in expressions of wishing..." The student must deduce his own tense-rules from the examples. Will he even *try* to do so? The sweeping statement of 271, "The supine in *u* (ablative)<sup>2</sup> is used chiefly with adjectives to indicate respect...", gives no hint that the adjectives which may thus be used with such supines are extremely limited in nature and in number. Why distinguish between the appositional genitive, treated in 281, and the expegetical genitive, treated in 282? There surely is no difference between them that a child (or many an adult) can understand, except that one of the descriptive terms for this genitive is of Latin origin while the other is of Greek extraction and is rather hard to pronounce. Under 288, *a*, no mention is made of the important fact that accusatives, when employed with verbs of reminding, remembering, and forgetting, are almost exclusively neuter pronouns. The general statement of 289, "Verbs of emotion take the genitive...", is misleading, and is not true. Pity is of course an emotion, but love, hate, admiration, etc., are emotions, and the verbs expressing those emotions 'take' an accusative. Under 293 the order of the impersonal verbs treated should be reversed to read *rēfert* and *interest*, and the explanation should be given that the *rē-* of *rēfert* was originally the ablative singular of *res* (or, at least, was so regarded by the Romans). Thus the feminine possessive adjective in the ablative singular (*meā*, *tuā*, etc.) used with *rēfert* was legitimate, while the similar usage with *interest* is based on nothing but analogy with the usage with *rēfert*. Section 296 states that "Some verbs of giving take either the dative and the accusative, or the accusative and the ablative..." No attempt is made to differentiate between person and thing in the application of this 'rule'. Why not frankly limit these "some verbs" to *dono*, and mention the English verb 'present' as an exact parallel? How is the pupil expected to distinguish between the nature of the statement of 283, "The Possessive Genitive is used to denote possession...", and that of 299, "The dative is used with *esse* to denote possession..."? The answer is, he cannot. The title of 299 should read 'Dative of the Possessor', and the statement there should be that the dative is used with *esse* to denote the fact of possession and that the construction is really a sort of substitute for a verb of having or possessing with

<sup>1</sup>No information whatever is given here about the publishers of the books named, or about the time and the place of their publication. C. K. >

<sup>2</sup>In citing from the book under review Latin words, phrases, or sentences I omit, for convenience, the macrons (except where a special point depends on the macron).

the proper case as object. In 300, which deals with "The Ethical Dative", neither example given, *ecce tibi homo* and *tibi bellum geret*, is a true and exclusive 'ethical dative'; the 'reference' idea may lie in both of them, especially in the former. We read in 302 that "The **Dative of Agent** is used with a passive verb, especially with the gerundive . . ." But in one of the examples the author presents the perfect passive. He gives no hint of the reason for the dative. The statement of 305, "**Dative of Separation.** Many verbs of warding off, robbing, and ridding, depriving, and separation take a dative, especially in poetry . . . This is called the dative of separation", is wholly bad, and the nomenclature is most unfortunate, despite the high authorities that employ it. It will inevitably lead to a confusion of this construction with the ablative of separation. In every instance this dative of the person with such verbs of forcible deprivation and riddance will, if carefully analyzed, turn out to be a genuine indirect object<sup>2</sup>. Under 321, which treats the ablative of accompaniment, no mention is made of the frequent omission of *cum* in military expressions. The ablative of 326, "Ablative of Accordance", might well be shown to be a development of the idea of cause. The treatment of the ablative absolute (343) is wholly inadequate: "The ablative, combined with a participle, adjective, or noun, may serve to express the circumstances in which an act takes place . . ." This bald statement explains nothing and dismisses into outer and inner darkness one of the most important constructions in Latin. True, a note is given adding the ideas of time, cause, etc., to that of circumstance. But nothing whatever is said of the clausal equivalence of the ablative absolute; yet this is the very soul of the construction. Moreover, the translations of the examples (except of the example under a) are couched in the awkward and un-English form of a passive participial phrase ("duce victo, abeunt, the leader having been conquered, they depart; urbe capta, homines redeunt, the city having been captured, the men return"). In 351, 1, c, *quam predimus arcem* (Vergil, Aeneid 2.322) certainly need not be interpreted as a present for a future (Mr. Wedek translates by "what citadel are we to seize?"). The eager question may well mean simply, 'What point of vantage are we <i. e. the Trojan armed forces which remain, not merely our own little band> now seizing which may serve as a base for successful defense by our aid?' In 366, by the statement "Negated or questioned verbs of doubt and uncertainty may be followed by the subjunctive with *quin* . . ." the pupil is left in complete ignorance in regard to usages with *affirmative* verbs of doubt. In 367, which treats substantive clauses of result, all the examples given limit the substantive idea to apposition. Plenty others might have been found showing true result implications.

Enough has been said here to show that this portion of the book needs careful revision.

Finally, I note that the Vocabulary offers no etymological or constructional information.

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B. W. MITCHELL

<I should call it a dative of reference. To me the expression 'dative of indirect object' is often utterly without illumination of the syntactical uses to which it is applied. C. K. >

Virgil and Other Latin Poets. Edited by J. B. Greenough, G. L. Kittredge, Thornton Jenkins. Boston: Ginn and Company (1930). Pp. xii + 338 + 248 + 220.

The volume here under review, *The Bimillennial Virgil, Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, is a new edition of a book that has won a high place among American text-books. It was "offered as a modest tribute on the bimillennial anniversary of Virgil's birth . . ." (so the Preface, iii). The text-content of this book is more varied than that of its predecessors, embracing the first six books of the *Aeneid* with interesting summaries of the remaining six. Following this come rather extensive and varied selections: Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4. 55-166, 662-763, 8.183-235, 10.1-77; Vergil, *Georgics* 4.454-527; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.85-145; Vergil, *Aeneid* 8.190-267; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.543-582, 2.83-118, 195-242, 491-512, 3.285-382, 4.507-562, 809-852, 5.207-220; Ovid, *Ex Ponto* 3.2.35-100; Ovid, *Heroines* 1.25-84, 7.181-194; Catullus 64.76-102, 132-201; Ovid, *Tristia* 4.10.1-58, 1.3.1-62, 10.1-14; Catullus 4; Ovid, *Tristia* 3.8, 10.1-40; Catullus 3, 13, 31, 46, 101, 49; Horace, *Carmina* 1.2, 14, 22, 34, 2.10, 18; Ovid, *Tristia* 3.4.1-34; Horace, *Carmina* 3. 2, 5.41-56, 13; Tibullus 1.3. 35-50; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.89-112.

The basis of the arrangement of the selections in some instances is similarity of subject-matter rather than identity of authorship.

This is a rather extensive range of reading; but the editors, by judicious selection, have taken care that nothing be included which would prove to be beyond the capacity of good fourth-year students of Latin. The Introduction to "Part I. Virgil" opens with a eulogy of the man and his poems. A brief comment upon the Augustan Age is followed by an account of Vergil's life and works and his remarkable fame, both contemporary and posthumous. The grammar and the style of the *Aeneid* are then discussed, as well as the versification. Altogether, this Introduction covers thirty-nine pages, and is finely and interestingly written. The Introduction to the other authors covers ten pages. This is very material condensation, necessary in order to avoid extending an already large book to undue bulk. Of course the treatment of the meters of Catullus and of Horace is rather sketchy; and it seems a pity that the nature and the elements of logaoedic verse could not have been briefly treated.

The notes to all the selections are excellent and illuminating, though much condensed. Yet everything of vital importance is clearly explained; what more is needed? There is, however, one unfortunate flaw in the uniform excellence of the notes. In the note on *Aeneid* 2.87, the editors have mistakenly, I think, retained the traditional, but now obsolete, interpretation of *primis ab annis* as 'from my earliest years'. Apparently they failed to take cognizance of its utter inconsistency with the word *natos* in 138. At least no allusion is made to it, nor is any attempt made to explain it away. The difficulty vanishes at once if *belli* be supplied with *annis*; thus the meaning becomes 'from the earliest years <of the war>'. Many of the best of the present-day editions have adopted this ex-

planation. Really this is the only point in reference to which the criticisms of a reviewer would be anything but mere carping.

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B. W. MITCHELL

The Architect of the Roman Empire 27 B. C.-A. D. 14.  
By T. Rice Holmes. Oxford: At the Clarendon  
Press (1931). Pp. xi + 192. \$4.75.

Dr. Holmes's book, *The Architect of the Roman Empire 27 B. C.-A. D. 14*, here under review, is the continuation of a volume entitled *The Architect of the Roman Empire*, which was published in 1928 (see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 24.151-152). That book carried the story down to 27 B. C. As its title indicates, the book under review covers the events which took place after the establishment of the principate in 27 B. C. down to the death of Augustus, in 14 A. D.

Again the author had many obstacles in his path. The most serious of them were his crippled health and his dependence upon outside help (Preface, v-vi). But, notwithstanding these heavy handicaps, the present volume displays the same fine qualities as its predecessor displays. The author's perseverance in reaching his goal, the completion of a history of the Augustan Period, deserves unstinted admiration.

In the present book Dr. Holmes again confines himself to political and military events. In form, too, the book is an exact replica of its predecessor. Part One (1-143) contains the minutely documented chronological narrative, divided into three chapters. Part II (145-179) consists of Appendices which offer additional evidence on controversial points in the narrative, together with some Addenda (180-181).

Dr. Holmes is aware (1) that the personality of Augustus lacks that element of self-revelation that makes Cicero (one may add Catullus and Horace) so appealing to us. Augustus is therefore somewhat of a riddle. Yet, though his personality "... baffles psychological inquiry, one may still hope to estimate his historical significance..." (2).

But even this estimate is fraught with difficulties (2-3):

... The initial difficulty is to find a pathway through the incomplete and disjointed historical materials. Studying the thirteen years in which Octavian was struggling to establish his position, one found the events grouped naturally as the outline of a drama. But, passing to the forty years during which, after he was called Augustus, he was designing the imperial structure, a student intent upon writing history may at first despair of being able to construct even a coherent narrative. Little by little, however, after mental digressions and retrogressions, he finds a way for himself through the maze, and ventures to hope that others will consent to follow him.

With amazing skill the veteran scholar finds his way in this labyrinth of evidence. With slow, but sure step, after a minute evaluation of every thread of evidence, he synchronizes the events into a narrative that is both dignified and convincing, showing (30) that Augustus "... was a mighty worker, and he worked with whole-hearted devotion for the public weal..."

In the narrative we find inserted many a suggestion

characterized by soundness and sanity. As examples may serve the suggestion explaining Agrippa's absence from the city in 23 B. C. (27-29), and the reasons for Tiberius's retirement to Rhodes (95-96; compare 160-161). Interesting, too, is the author's scepticism about Augustus's religious sincerity (46-47).

Since the author was dependent on outside help, several slips have crept in which, under normal circumstances, doubtless would not have been found in these pages. I shall limit myself to two. One can no more rightly speak of the Augustan edicts discovered in the course of the excavations at Cyrene as "*papyri*" (93) than of Tomis, the place of Ovid's exile, as an island (124). Dr. Holmes, who as a rule gives in bracketed marginal notes the modern equivalents of ancient names of places, failed to mention that Tomis is the ancient name for the modern city Constantza, in Rumania. A more careful reading of the manuscript of Dr. Holmes's book by that eminent historian, Professor Hugh Last<sup>1</sup>, ought to have prevented mistakes of this kind.

A bibliography given by Dr. Holmes is usually very exhaustive. Hence I am surprised to find that in the present book he failed to list, in connection with his narrative, some modern contributions. In three places he touches upon the *Vigiles* (91, 11, 129-130), but no mention is made of P. K. Baillie Reynolds, *The Vigiles of Imperial Rome* (for a review of this book see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 22.7-8). While this is not an outstanding book, yet it is the only book in English on the subject. In connection with the freedmen (131-135), Professor G. La Piana's article, *Foreign Groups in Rome During the First Centuries of the Empire* (*Harvard Theological Review* 20 [1927], 183-403), ought not to be missing. Nor should Ernst Kornemann's latest contribution, *Doppelprinzipat und Reichsteilung im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1930), be absent.

The Appendices contain very useful information. Compare, for example, *The Deputations that Waited upon Augustus in 19 B. C.* (147-149, especially 148), and *Lex Iunia or Lex Iunia Norbana?* (161-164). I am glad to find that Dr. Holmes agrees with the arguments advanced by A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 24.108-110, especially 110, column 2). Exhaustive, too, is the Appendix on Aliso (164-165) and on *The Site of the Varian Disaster* (166-174), but the results reached with respect to this latter topic are hardly worth the space given to it. In this connection Otto Prein's book, *Aliso bei Oberraden und die Varusschlacht* (Münster, Aschen-dorff, 1930), ought to have been consulted<sup>2</sup>. I may add that Dr. Holmes's book is equipped with an excellent Index (183-192) and three maps.

These few criticisms I have made do not at all detract from the value of the book as a whole, for books perfect in every respect do not exist. In the Preface (v), Dr.

<sup>1</sup>In the Preface (v) Dr. Holmes states that "After the manuscript was sent to Oxford it was read by Mr. Hugh Last..."

<sup>2</sup>Mention may be made of a monograph entitled *The Defeat of Varus and the Frontier Policy of Augustus*, by W. A. Oldfather and H. V. Canter, reviewed by Professor R. V. D. Magoffin, in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 10.47-48. C. K. >

Holmes calls this book his last historical work. He may well look upon it with pride as one of his greatest accomplishments. In the English language, so far as scope, method, and scholarship are concerned, it is and will for a long time continue to be the only complete and authoritative account of the military and political history of the Augustan Age.

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#### ONCE MORE THE ROMAN ATTITUDE TOWARD LITERARY PURSUITS

A subject in which I have long been interested is the attitude of the Romans toward literary pursuits—the causes of that attitude and its effects. Parallels to that attitude, its causes and its effects, have for me great interest<sup>1</sup>.

In a book which is to me, in many ways, a very unpleasant book, Mrs. Gertrude Atherton's autobiography<sup>2</sup>, I find two passages that bear on this topic.

On pages 60-61, speaking of her mother-in-law, a lady of Spanish ancestry, Mrs. Atherton writes thus:

I fancy she had hopes of making a true Atherton out of me, and I sometimes wonder she did not. I was very young, unformed in character, and it is extraordinary how the collective pressure of the religiously average

can almost convince any one subject to pangs of originality that they are right and he wrong. It is the bourgeois standard, of course, but one that has invaded all aristocracies—to say nothing of royalties. At certain of the older courts of Europe no one can be officially presented who has ever received money for a more or less corresponding value. That, of course, excludes artists of all denominations, even were one a Sophocles or a Velasquez. The attitude of my new family was precisely similar. Gentlemen engaged in business or followed one of the professions; but writers and painters, sculptors or musicians, were beyond the pale, not only in Menlo Park but in San Francisco generally, as no scion of a leading family had then taken to any of the arts. Therefore, necessarily, artists were common.

My mother-in-law had an even higher standard. "Ladies in Spain do not write," she said to me when I began to betray symptoms; and it was quite twelve years after I published my first novel before the painful subject that I wrote at all was mentioned by any of the family in my presence, although I was generally upon good terms with them. (Mrs. Rathbone was an exception, but that comes later.) I dedicated one of my first little books to Mrs. Atherton, and she thanked me politely and never referred to it again. I think she felt she had been visited with an undeserved notoriety.

At one time Mrs. Atherton was seeking quarters in Haworth, England. A woman whom she asked to take her as a boarder declined to do so. Note this passage (240):

She escorted me to the door, and once more gave me a suspicious look. "What does a pretty young woman like you want to be writing books for?" she demanded. "It seems to me you could make more out of your life than that. And I suppose you are rich too and used to more than you will find in this village."

CHARLES KNAPP

<sup>1</sup>See e. g. my remarks in THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 21.137, 138-139. In that paper I quoted extensively remarks by Professor Harry Thurston Peck, in which a parallel was drawn between the development of American literature and that of Roman literature.  
<sup>2</sup>Adventures of a Novelist (Liveright, Inc., New York, 1932. Pp. [viii] + 398).

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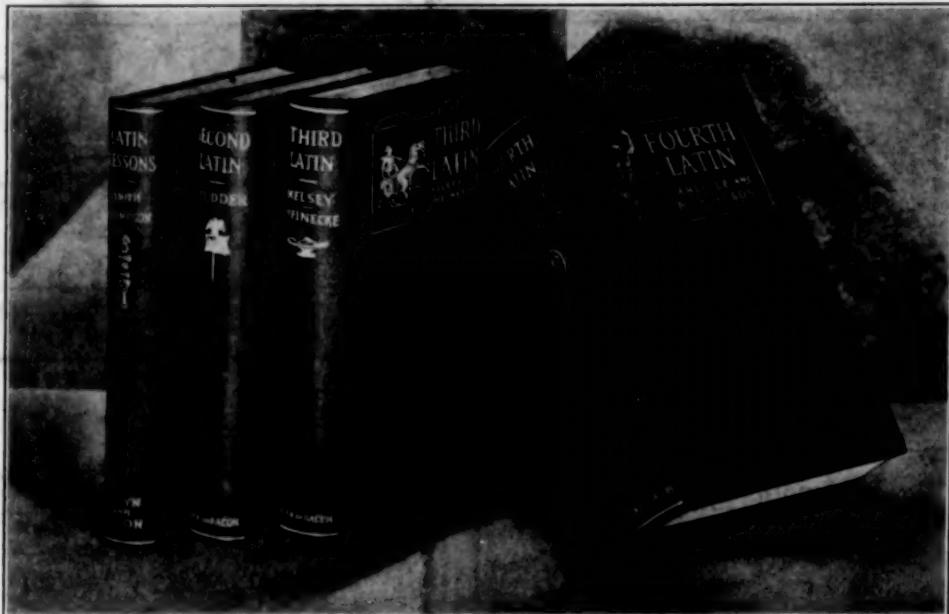
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